

FAQs

COVID-19 FOR PATIENTS

This document was created by Healthcare Ready in collaboration with the [American Society of Health-System Pharmacists \(ASHP\)](#) and the [National Association of Chain Drug Stores \(NACDS\)](#). It is intended to provide COVID-19 pandemic guidance and resources to pharmacies and pharmacists and their patients on prescription medications.

Can I get an early refill of my medication?

The [CDC recommends](#) that patients have at least a two-week supply of medications during physical distancing for COVID-19. During times of disaster and disease outbreaks, like the COVID-19 pandemic, states may take action to allow patients to receive early refills of prescription medications. To date, **all 50 states have allowed pharmacists to provide emergency refills** on a chronic medication. However, variations do exist in each state.

Variations by state may include:

- How early the prescription can be filled
- Number of days' supply that can be provided
- Type of medication (non-control vs. controlled) that qualifies for early refills
- Insurance coverage
- Requirements for provider authorization or prescription

Check with your pharmacist and your state's [Board of Pharmacy](#) for specific details in your state.

If you are insured, check your prescription insurance provider's website, or call the number on the back of your insurance card, to learn more about coverage for early refills. [America's Health Insurance Plans \(AHIP\)](#) has a [list of waivers and resources from health insurance companies](#) providing assistance during the COVID-19 outbreak. See if your insurer is on the list.

Read the [Healthcare Ready blog](#) for more tips on prescription medication preparedness during COVID-19.

- **Can I get more than a 30-day supply?**

The number of days of supply allowed varies by state and by insurance coverage – some states allow for up to a 90-day supply to be refilled. Follow the guidance above to learn more about refills in your state and allowable days of supply during this emergency. Remember there may be additional limitations by state and insurer, especially for controlled medications.

- **What if I am uninsured?**

If you are uninsured and need prescription medications refilled, you still have options.

Multiple states have [reopened the enrollment window](#) for health insurance exchanges under the Affordable Care Act. If you live in [one of these states](#), you may be able to take advantage of this option.

You may also try searching for your medication on the [Medicine Assistance Tool](#). This tool may match you with financial assistance programs for your medications, tailored to your financial situation. You may also call [2-1-1](#) – available across several localities in the U.S. – to ask about local services that may help you pay for your medications.

Is there a chance my prescription medication will not be available due to shortages?

While pandemics may impact the pharmaceutical supply chain, drug manufacturers are working to ensure their operations are stable. It is possible that you may not be able to obtain your prescription for a short time, as **“spot shortages”** may occur during a pandemic. A spot shortage occurs when a prescription medication is temporarily unavailable in your pharmacy due to high demand. Talk to your provider about alternative treatment options if this is the case. You may also search the [ASHP Drug Shortages website](#) or [FDA drug shortage list](#) to see if your medications are in shortage.

What is the best way to get my medication refilled from a pharmacy during the pandemic?

- Order your prescriptions a day or two early to allow the pharmacy staff extra time to prepare your order.
- If you use automated telephone or app-based options to place refill requests, read automated messages carefully. For example, a message that says your prescription is *“ready to be refilled”* does not mean your prescription is *“ready for pick-up.”*
- Utilize drive through, mail order, or home delivery options whenever possible.
- It is not advisable to stockpile large quantities of your medications beyond what you need for the next few weeks and months.

Can I receive virtual patient care and treatment, when appropriate, through a telehealth visit?

Yes, [telehealth](#) is a way to receive virtual care from a healthcare provider, through a phone call or video chat, for example. You can learn more about the range of services encompassed by telehealth [here](#). During the pandemic, when physical distancing is an important way to protect yourself and your community, you may want to talk to a provider about your options to receive virtual care.

Telehealth visits may occur with the provider you typically see, or other providers through a telehealth service. Several options for telehealth exist and you [may be able to get a prescription, if indicated, as a result of such a consultation](#). There may be additional restrictions to receive a prescription for a controlled substance, such as a prior relationship with the prescriber.

Telehealth availability is expanding during the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage physical distancing and protect healthcare workers and patients. Even if your physician specifically does not offer telehealth, several telehealth companies offer such services directly to patients and many pharmacies partner with other entities to deliver such care.

If you do not have a relationship with a healthcare provider, there are [telehealth companies](#) that offer telehealth services to the public. If you do not already have a doctor, read [here](#) to find companies providing telehealth services.

You may call your insurer prior to conducting a telehealth visit to understand your coverage options. You may try to find your insurer on [this list](#) to see what support they are offering, as many are now expanding coverage to telehealth services because of the pandemic.

- **Can I receive telehealth coverage if I am covered by Medicare?**

Medicare has also expanded coverage to include telehealth visits for Medicare beneficiaries. Read the [CMS Telemedicine Fact Sheet](#) for information on your coverage options.

Can I get tested for coronavirus at a community pharmacy?

The availability of and process for coronavirus testing is rapidly changing. The administration has worked to speed up COVID-19 testing by bringing together leaders from pharmacy and lab companies to offer drive through testing outside of specific pharmacies. Locations are being piloted and rolled out across specific states before becoming more widely available to the public.

If you suspect you may have been exposed to COVID-19, call your healthcare provider to let them know your symptoms. They will work with you to [determine if a test is needed](#) and how you may get one. Additionally, review information from your [state health department](#), as guidance for testing varies by state.



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